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PP RUEH DU RUEHMR RUEHPA RUEHRN RUEHTRO  
DE RUCNDT #1193/01 3541802  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
P 201802Z DEC 07  
FM USMISSION USUN NEW YORK  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3380  
INFO RUEHZO/AFRICAN UNION COLLECTIVE  
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 1214  
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 1103  
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 2980  
XMT AMEMBASSY ALGIERS  
AMEMBASSY CAIRO  
AMEMBASSY RABAT  
AMEMBASSY TUNIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 USUN NEW YORK 001193

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/19/2022

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SUBJECT: UNGA: REPORT ON AFRICAN DELEGATIONS AT THE 62ND GA

REF: 06 USUN 2260

Classified By: Min.- Counselor Jeffrey DeLaurentis for reasons 1.4 (B&D)  
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[11](#). (SBU) Gerald Scott is again serving as Senior Area Advisor for Africa at USUN during the regular session of the General Assembly. These are his personal reflections on African participation as the regular session of the 62nd GA draws to a close. (Note that while in the UN context the African Group includes the states of the North African littoral, usage of the term in this cable reflects Ambassador Scott's portfolio which deals only with the delegations of the African governments falling within the purview of State's Bureau of African Affairs.)

#### SUMMARY

[12](#). (SBU) The record of the African delegations at this GA does not vary much from that of last year. There was some criticism of the USG in the General Debate, especially on our Cuban embargo. A protracted negotiation of our resolution condemning rape "in conflict and related situations" resulted in a much modified text which was finally adopted by consensus. Four country-specific human rights resolutions (Iran, Burma, Belarus and DPRK) were approved in Third Committee (and have been referred to Plenary), but it was a near-run thing since no-action motions receiving substantial African support were proposed on three of them in Committee. The anti-Israeli texts passed by massive margins, African performance mitigated by a handful of abstentions. The annual resolution condemning our Cuban embargo, which also passed with almost universal approbation, was the occasion for six African delegations to attack us from the floor. Our efforts at budget discipline received no real African support. But in elections of individuals to UN bodies, our candidates have prevailed with large numbers of African votes. I recommend further dialogue to emphasize the importance we attach to the UN and our desire to see it function more effectively. End Summary

#### THE GENERAL DEBATE

[13](#). (SBU) The seven days of the General Debate, which begins the General Assembly, provide the annual opportunity for each member to express its views on the state of the world. Most of this is diplomatic boiler-plate, but occasionally something breaks the monotony. Since any direct criticism of another government is, in this context, an unfriendly act, I always listen for mention of the US. Angola, the Gambia, Namibia, and Sao Tome all objected to our Cuban embargo. Namibia which has criticized us on this in four of the last

five General Debates, inaccurately called it a "blockade," as do the Cubans. Eritrea charged that we sided with Ethiopia in the boundary dispute. But President Mugabe of Zimbabwe gave one of the most vituperative speeches heard in such debates, partly directed at the British but mostly at the USG and President Bush. (Except for a junior note-taker, we withdrew all our delegation during his performance.)

14. (U) On the other hand, several delegations praised us. Liberia, Malawi (for help with Malaria), Mauritius (for our sanctions against Burma), Togo. Niger's printed text had praise for our Middle East initiative, but this was dropped from the spoken text. Botswana favorably cited President Truman. For some reason, Djibouti and Mali did not speak this year.

#### THE U.S.ANTI-RAPE RESOLUTION

15. (C) After weeks of negotiation, the Third Committee adopted the U.S.-sponsored resolution "Eliminating rape and other forms of sexual violence in all their manifestations, including in conflict and related situations" by consensus. Our original title was "Condemning the Use of Rape as an Instrument of State Policy," and the text was more pointed towards deliberate suppression of a population (or segment thereof) by violence including rape. Our draft text, which we had hoped would garner widespread support, was instead opposed by a small group of African missions who insisted that it was in fact aimed at Sudan - and possibly other African states. While we believe that most African delegations would have accepted our draft, or something close to it, the dynamic of African group politics meant that almost all were silent in the caucus while Egypt, Sudan and Uganda held forth on the necessity of resisting the US text.

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We were in negotiation with the Africa group headed first by Benin and then by Angola. Both gave the impression of trying to be helpful, but the constant referral of every modification to the Africa Group allowed Sudan, Egypt, Uganda and South Africa to set the tone. The DRC was an original co-sponsor, but reportedly spoke little. Tanzania reportedly made helpful arguments. The final consensus preserved the essence of our argument, but the lengthy process consumed an extraordinary amount of time and energy.

#### COUNTRY-SPECIFIC HUMAN RIGHTS RESOLUTIONS

16. (SBU) Every year we, Canada and the Europeans sponsor country-specific human rights resolutions in Third Committee.

This year the process was complicated by the existence of the Human Rights Council, the Geneva-based body replacing the Human Rights Commission. The Council, of which we are not a member, has so far compiled a very weak record, finding only Israel worthy of serious criticism. We and others have therefore argued that the General Assembly and its Third Committee should continue to be the fora for consideration of egregious violators. This year we sponsored a text on Belarus, the EU sponsored texts on the DPRK and Burma, and Canada sponsored a text on Iran. In the Third Committee (see USUN 1082) the DPRK draft passed 97 (US) - 23 - 60. (The Africans were 10 - 5 - 26 - and 7 not participating.) The North Koreans did not present a no-action motion to block consideration of the draft.

17. (SBU) The Burma, Iran and Belarus drafts were all confronted by no-action motions in Third Committee, all of which were defeated, but in the case of Iran by one vote. Africa no-action votes were as follows: on Burma, 17 - 6 - 17 - 8; on Iran, 28 - 4 (Burundi, Liberia, Madagascar and Rwanda) - 10 - 6; on Belarus, 17 - 6 - 15 - 10. These are the key votes, because, if successful, they block consideration of the texts which pass by comfortable margins - though only after a major lobbying effort. A number of African delegations were consistent supporters of no-action

motions: Angola, Botswana, Congo, DRC, Gambia, Guinea, Namibia, S.Africa, Swaziland and Zambia. To these Sudan, Uganda and Zimbabwe added consistently negative votes on the texts of the drafts as well. But an interesting point; in spite of the rhetoric about group unity, most of the 48 AF delegations did not adhere to this pattern. Some were consistently absent: CAR, Guinea-Bissau, Sao Tome, Seychelles. Some consistently abstained (or mixed abstentions with absences): Cape Verde, Ethiopia, Kenya, Mozambique, Sierra Leone. And the other 26 were more varied in their voting. So it is clear that there is no African consensus on the question of country-specific human rights texts. So long as no African country is the object of the exercise, most delegations demonstrate a considerable freedom from the restraints of what is often put forward as the Non-Aligned Movement position of opposition.

8.(SBU) On the texts, Burundi and Liberia were constantly with the US. Tanzania and Ghana were with us on Burma and the DPRK. Sudan, Uganda and Zimbabwe were consistently opposed; Somalia opposed the texts three times, the Gambia and Guinea twice. A more detailed analysis was supplied by email on Nov. 26th. What will really count, of course, are the votes in Plenary which will take place after I leave the Mission.

#### ANTI-ISRAELI RESOLUTIONS

19. (C) Every year the GA votes a number of pro-Palestinian/anti-Israeli texts. These are sticks to beat the Israelis (and ourselves) and every year we suffer massive defeat. We are required by PL 106-13 to actively seek the abolition of entities that contribute neither to peace nor to the goal of UN reform. With that in view, we concentrate on attempting to reduce the support for three resolutions that mandate three unhelpful UN bodies: The Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories, The Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat, and The Committee on the Exercise of the

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Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

110. (U) The Plenary votes on the Division of Palestinian Rights and on the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People have taken place. The Division was reconfirmed by 110 - 8(US) - 54.

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The Committee was reconfirmed by 109 - 8(US) - 55. (Note that this Committee is chaired by Senegal, and Guinea, Madagascar, Mali, Namibia, Niger, Sierra Leone, and South Africa are members.) In both votes, the Africans voted 37 - 0 - 2 (Cameroon and Cote d'Ivoire) and 9 marked absent (Burundi, Chad, Eq. Guinea, the Gambia, B. Bissau, Madagascar, Rwanda, Sao Tome and Seychelles).

111. (SBU) The Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices was reconfirmed in Fourth Committee by a narrower margin (85 - 8(US) - 70). (This is a three-member committee of which Senegal is the only African.) The Africans voted 25 - 0 - 8 (Angola, Burundi, Cameroon, Cote d'Ivoire, E.Guinea, Ethiopia, Malawi, and Swaziland) and 15 not participating (B. Faso, CAR, Chad, DRC, the Gambia, G.Bissau, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Rwanda, Sao Tome, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, and Somalia). Since the total of negative votes and abstentions on this resolution almost equal the positive votes, we are pushing to reduce the support for this text in the Plenary vote which at this writing has not taken place. (In the 4th Committee vote, compared with last year, Eq. Guinea went from "yes" to "abstain." Cape Verde and Uganda, the reverse.)

#### THE CUBA EMBARGO RESOLUTION

¶12. (SBU) Another event in which we suffer an annual loss is the resolution calling for an end to the U.S. embargo of Cuba. This year the vote was 184 - 4(US) - 1. Every member of the African Group voted in favor of the resolution; no surprise there. But in addition, six addressed the Assembly to underscore their opposition to our policy. They were South Africa, Uganda, Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe and Sudan. (Uganda was new to this list. On the other hand, Lesotho and Namibia spoke last year, but not this year.) The standard language is more in sorrow than in anger, but Sudan called the embargo a "blockade" and said it was "a crime against humanity."

#### INDIVIDUAL ELECTIONS

¶13. (SBU) Another major aspect of our effort in the General Assembly is the election of U.S. candidates to various UN bodies. Here we are almost always successful, and generally have very good support from African delegations. This year we saw Ms Felice Gaer, one of twelve candidates, elected to one of five open seats on the UN Committee Against Torture. David Walker, the Comptroller General of the U.S., was elected to the UN Independent Audit Advisory Committee (thirty African delegations pledged their support). We expect that Pierre-Richard Prosper will be elected to the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination in January.

#### THE BUDGET AND UN REFORM

¶14. (C) Part of the dialogue in New York is our effort to restrain the UN budget and promote more efficient use of resources. We battle strong headwinds on this, since the Africans contribute almost nothing and receive a great deal. If we and a few others pay more, it is no loss to them. Most of the negotiations on these matters take place among experts in the Fifth Committee, but I try to sensitize Permanent Representatives to the reality that our concerns are not only driven by (legitimate) Congressional interest, but also by our desire to see the UN made more effective. Unfortunately, when most delegations hear "reform," it translates into more African seats on the Security Council -- and not much else.

#### COMMENT

¶15. (C) The African Group has the reputation of being the most unified of the regional groups. This is a reflection of the reality that the weak hang together for fear of being hanged separately. And they are swayed on some issues important to us by the remnant of the anti-colonial dynamic and the knowledge (as one Ambassador put it to me) that they are (some of them, at least) one coup d'etat away from finding themselves on, e.g., a human rights black list. But it does not take much contact to realize that African governments, like most others, send very impressive people to New York. Unfortunately, unless they are on the Security Council, or are before the Council because of crises, or are automatically very major players (e.g., Nigeria), they necessarily get little attention from us until we staff up for the GA -- at which point one does one's best.

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¶16. (C) Cooperation with individual missions is often striking -- even if it frequently does not in public extend further than a principled abstention on a dicey vote. I should like to mention several missions particularly helpful this year (some more with advice and information than with votes): Botswana, Burundi, Liberia, Madagascar, Mauritius, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Tanzania. Others, particularly unhelpful, were Uganda (a real change), South Africa (thanks to their NAM leadership tradition), and of course Sudan and Zimbabwe (with neither of whom have I established real contact).

¶17. (C) Most of the rest were personally congenial, but

unable or unwilling to step very far away from the standard posture on controversial issues. Many in the north are governed by Islamic/Arab considerations. South Africa exerts too much of a pull on her neighbors. But if engaged and cultivated individually, much useful work can be done.

¶18. (C) I recommend that most Embassies seek out the appropriate level at the Foreign Ministry or the Presidency and discuss our common and divergent positions during the GA. Our gratitude for support should be expressed as well as our disappointment, particularly on human rights issues, since these matters come up year after year. In the process, they should be reminded that there is no real African consensus on these matters.

¶19. (C) Governments need to hear that we value the UN, take it seriously, and want it to be more effective in dealing with the crises and the issues of the international system. There is a perception that we see the UN, and especially the GA, as a negative element in our world. This may occasionally be an accurate view, but it is a distinctly unhelpful one, especially in Africa where the UN is seen as the natural friend of the weak. We need to position ourselves better in this regard, and in doing so will increase useful cooperation in matters of common concern in the years ahead.

Khalilzad